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Public services

On this page, you can read about the most common public services in Sweden.

[Other languages](#)

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Summary

- People living in Sweden have good access to public services.
- Quota refugees receive support from various authorities.

- Children are offered a preschool place from the age of one.
- For children between the ages of 6 and 16, school is compulsory and free of charge.
- There are also open preschools, which parents can visit with their children.
- Health and medical care is available to everyone, but there can be long waiting times.
- Mental health is an important issue in Sweden. It is generally accepted to talk about your issues or seek care if you feel mentally unwell.
- There are midwifery clinics for pregnant women.
- In Sweden, it is considered important to have good oral hygiene and take care of your teeth for preventive purposes. Children and young people receive free dental care.
- Social services help and provide support to children, young people, families and the elderly.
- The police, emergency services and ambulances are responsible for the safety and security of the country's residents. The public has a great deal of faith in them.
- In emergency situations, call 112.

National authorities in Sweden

In Sweden, you will come into contact with various national authorities that have different responsibilities in Swedish society. For example, there are authorities that provide financial support if you become ill or are unemployed, or a pensioner. In order for society to be able to finance the financial support that residents receive when they need it, everyone who lives in Sweden pays taxes. How much tax you pay is determined, among other things, based on how much income you earn.

You can visit the websites of the various authorities to get more information. There you can also see how you can get in touch with the authorities and the languages in which they provide information.

The Swedish Tax Agency

The Swedish Tax Agency is responsible for collecting taxes. They also apply for population registration and register marriages and more. You come into contact with the Swedish Tax Agency when you register yourself in the population register, which means that you register your personal data with the authority. Everyone who registers themselves in the Swedish population register receives a personal identity number and can apply for an identity card. Such a card is important, for example, when you want to open a bank account or receive medical health or medical care.

If you want to get married in Sweden, you must contact the Swedish Tax Agency in advance for a so-called "consideration of impediments to marriage". This is done to check that there are no obstacles to the marriage and that the people who are to be married are over 18 years old and are not closely related, and that neither of the parties is already married. The Swedish Tax Agency also registers information when a child is born or when someone dies.

The Swedish Tax Agency is also responsible for collecting the tax that you pay on your income.

[The Swedish Tax Agency's website](#) *External link, opens in new window.*

The Swedish Social Insurance Agency

The Swedish Social Insurance Agency handles and makes decisions about various forms of compensation, depending on your stage of life. For example, if you are on parental leave and caring for a small child, you can apply for a "parental allowance". If you are ill for a long time, you can apply for "sickness benefits". You can also apply for support and compensation if you have a disability. The Swedish Social Insurance Agency is responsible for administering and paying the establishment allowance to which new arrivals enrolled in the establishment programme are entitled.

You are obliged to apply for the various benefits provided by the Swedish Social Insurance Agency. If it turns out that the information that forms the basis for your compensation from the Swedish Social Insurance Agency is incorrect and means that you have had too much money paid out, you may be liable for repayment.

[The Swedish Social Insurance Agency's website](#) *External link, opens in new window.*

The Swedish Public Employment Service

Among other things, the Swedish Public Employment Service has the task of providing support to jobseekers in Sweden. The authority cannot offer you a job, but it can help you look for a job and answer questions you have about the labour market.

The Swedish Public Employment Service is responsible for the establishment programme, which is aimed at newly arrivals in Sweden. The municipality where you are staying will help you with your initial contact with the Swedish Public Employment Service, so that you can participate in the establishment programme.

[The Swedish Public Employment Service's website](#) *External link, opens in new window.*

Childcare and primary school

Childcare and preschool

From the age of one year, children can start preschool. You apply for a place from the date you want your child to start preschool. This allows both parents to work or study.

Children's development benefits from participating in preschool activities. The preschools are staffed with trained personnel who meet the needs of children through daily activities. As a legal guardian, you pay a fee for your child to attend preschool. The fee is based on your family's joint income. The children receive

meals at preschool.

Open preschool

Open preschool is a meeting place where parents or other adults can meet and socialise with their children, if they do not attend preschool. At the open preschool you can meet other parents and children and thus also practice your Swedish language skills. Open preschools have staff who organise activities that take place there, but you are also involved and are responsible for your child. Open preschools are available in most municipalities in Sweden and they are free of charge.

Photo: Ann-Sofi Rosenkvist/imagebank.sweden.se

Compulsory primary school

Children start primary school with kindergarten at the age of six and must attend school until ninth grade. Primary school is compulsory in Sweden. Swedish schools follow a national curriculum, which means that all children receive the same education throughout the country. Education from primary school up to and including the university level is usually free of charge.

School uniforms are not used in Sweden; children can wear whatever clothes they want at school. This also includes religious clothing such as veils or other religious symbols.

The relationship between teachers and pupils is important, and the teacher's task is to give students the opportunity for good learning. The teacher guides children in school and follows their development. Teachers have the right to verbally reprimand children who do not contribute to ensuring a calm environment. However, a teacher must never punish children, neither physically nor psychologically.

Care and health

Health and medical care

You have the right to seek treatment at a health centre. The health centre employs physicians and nurses who can help you directly or send a referral to a specialist if necessary.

It is important that you talk to a healthcare professional about what illnesses you have and what medicines you take. This will help ensure that you get the right help at the right time. Healthcare professionals have a duty of confidentiality, which means they are not allowed to share information about your health with anyone else without your approval. This also applies to your family members.

You have the right to get help from an interpreter if you do not speak Swedish, and this service is free of charge. If you are injured or seriously ill, you have the right to seek emergency care at the nearest hospital.

In the Swedish healthcare system, you may encounter healthcare professionals who specialise in treating various illnesses. This can mean that, when seeking care, you may need to book several different appointments with different physicians.

In the Swedish healthcare system, discrimination is not permitted. Everyone who seeks care should receive care.

The Swedish healthcare system is good, but it is overloaded. This means that there can be long waiting times. There is a certain order of priority in healthcare, which means that those who are most in need of care receive help first.

Photo: Swedish Migration Agency/Tomislav Stjepic

Mental health

In Sweden, mental health is considered to be as important as physical health. It is therefore important that you maintain healthy habits in your daily life that promote both your mental and physical health. Examples of such habits include getting enough sleep, eating a good and varied diet, and being physically active or exercising.

If you experience mental health problems such as difficulty sleeping, stress, anxiety, panic attacks or depression, help is available. You can often get support or treatment at your health centre. For example, you may be offered advice, counselling, or psychological treatment. Some treatments are also available by phone or computer. You may also be treated with medication. Sometimes you can get a referral to a psychiatric clinic from a physician at the health centre, but you can also contact a psychiatric clinic directly.

[Address, telephone number and opening hours of various clinics \(in swedish\)](#) [External link, opens in new window.](#)

Photo: Kristin Lidell/imagebank.sweden.se

Maternal health

As a pregnant woman, you are offered regular visits to a midwifery clinic to examine and follow up your development and that of your unborn child. It is important to contact a midwife clinic if you are pregnant, even if it is voluntary to do so. It costs nothing to visit a midwifery clinic.

You will usually visit the clinic between six and ten times during the course of your pregnancy. The number of visits may be expanded if necessary, depending on how you feel and how the fetus is developing. All pregnant women are offered an ultrasound examination during their pregnancy. When it is time to give birth, you have the right to choose the hospital where that will happen.

Photo: Simon Paulin/imagebank.sweden.se

Pharmacies and medications

It is the pharmacies that administer and sell prescription medications in Sweden. In order to buy and pick up certain medications, you need a prescription, which is usually written by a physician. A nurse or midwife may prescribe prescriptions for certain medications.

In pharmacies, you can also buy over-the-counter medications. Pharmacists are trained and used to providing advice about medications, but it is physicians who are responsible for the actual treatment of diseases.

Photo: Swedish Migration Agency Björn Bjarnesjö

Dental care

A large proportion of dental care in Sweden is preventive. This means that you visit the dentist's office regularly for examination and follow-up of your oral health.

Children and young people are entitled to free dental care until the year they turn 23 and are summoned to regular visits to the dental clinic. Adults must make an appointment and pay for dental care. In some cases, adults who cannot afford to pay for dental care can apply for reimbursement from the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, so-called "dental care support".

Social services

The social services can help and provide support to children, young people, families and the elderly. For example, they provide family counselling and family moderated conversations if you need such help. The social services also provide support if you or someone in your family has an addiction. They can also mediate contact with local women's shelters and provide assistance with temporary sheltered accommodation. You can apply for financial support from the social services if you are unable to support yourself.

Police, emergency services and ambulances

Various government authorities are responsible for the safety and security of the country's residents. Police, emergency services and ambulance personnel are trained, and they are tasked with helping everyone living in the country. The public has great faith in these authorities and their staff. The ambulances in Sweden are well-equipped and accessible to the public.

Fire brigade, police and ambulance.

Who to contact in an emergency

In case of an emergency, call 112. You should only call this number if there is an acute danger to life, property or the environment. Your call will be answered by an SOS operator. Their job is to ask questions in order to assess what kind of help is needed in the specific emergency. All SOS operators speak both Swedish and English. If necessary, an interpreter in another language can be connected to the call.

[112](#) – emergencies

Call the emergency number 112 in emergency situations, such as an urgent medical condition or an ongoing crime or fire.

Only call 112 in the event of an emergency. If you have questions that are not urgent, use one of the phone numbers listed below.

[1177](#) – advice on healthcare and health

Call 1177 or visit the website [1177 Helpline External link, opens in new window](#) if you need non-emergency care. They can provide answers to questions about illnesses and medical care.

[114 14](#) – Police in non-emergency situations

Discussion questions

- The Swedish people generally have a high level of trust in the Swedish authorities and their staff. What does trust in authorities look like in your home country?
- Do you know who to contact for information or if you need to use a public service?

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